

THE URBAN DISTRICT OF
ATHERTON.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

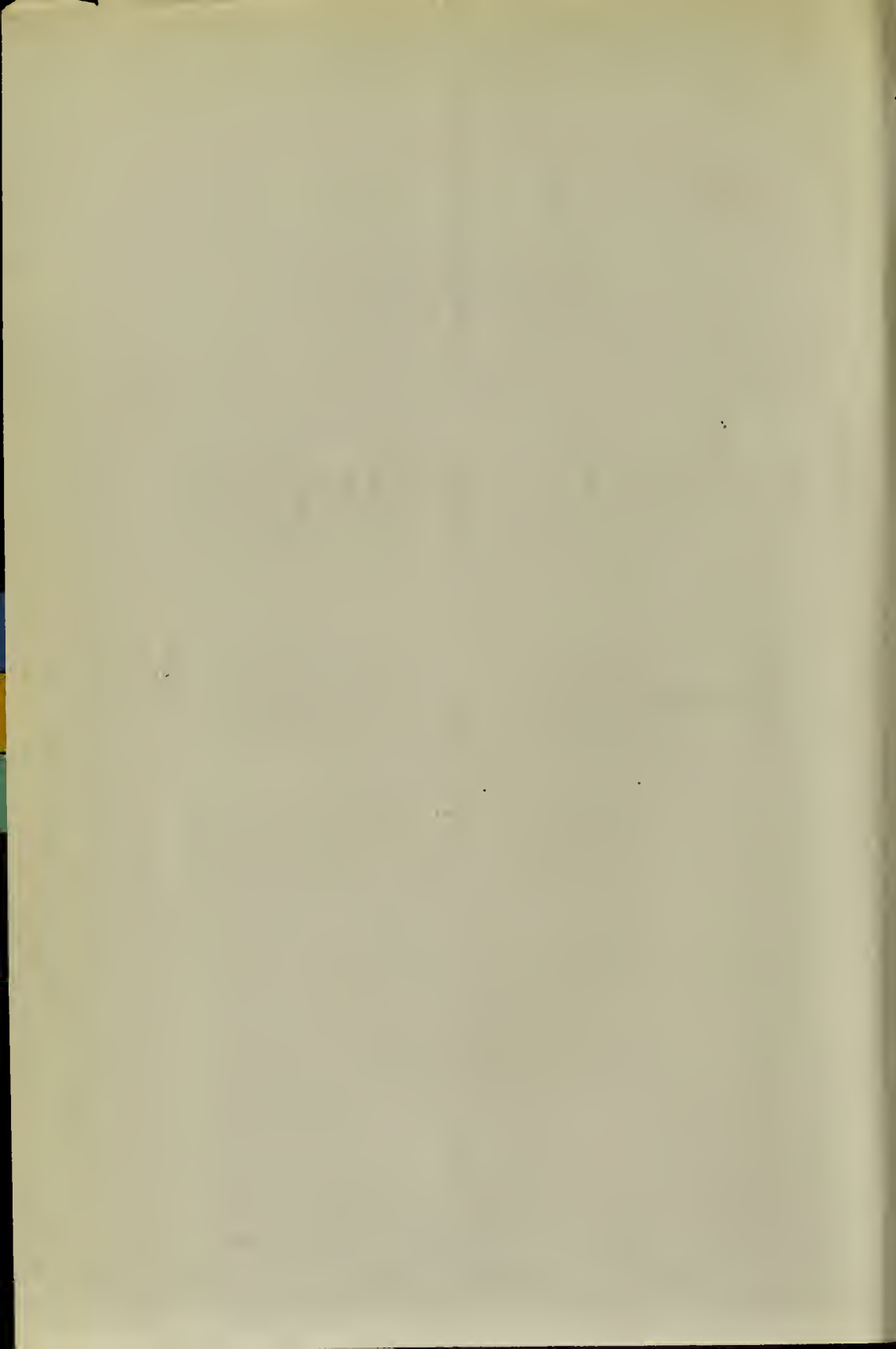
FOR

YEAR 1901.

ATHERTON :

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ANNUAL REPORT.

114, HIGH STREET,
ATHERTON.

*To the Chairman and Members of the Atherton Urban
District Council.*

GENTLEMEN,

I have pleasure in submitting to you my Annual Report on the health and sanitary condition of the District during the year 1901.

The population as estimated by the Census is 16,211. The houses in the district number 3,072, which gives an average of 5·26 inhabitants in each house. This includes the residents in the work-house.

The number of deaths from all causes were 348, giving a death-rate of 21·46 per 1,000 inhabitants, comparing unfavourably with the rate in 1900 and in 1899, which was 19·1 and 20·7 respectively.

The total number of births was 535, of which 277 were males and 258 females. This gives a rate of 33 births per 1,000 inhabitants, compared to 34·7 in 1900, and 34·1 in 1899.

The deaths from the seven principal Zymotic Diseases, viz. :—Scarlet Fever (4), Typhoid Fever (8), Measles, Smallpox, Diphtheria, and Membranous Croup (2), and Diarrhœa (59), numbered 73, giving

a rate of 4·3 per 1000 inhabitants, as compared to 4·18 in 1900, and 5·65 in 1899, and being 21·8 per cent. of the total deaths in the district.

From Phthisis deaths numbered 14, giving a rate of ·86, as compared to 1·33 in 1900, and 1·11 in 1899. Other deaths were:—Influenza, 1; Enteritis, 20; Puerperal Fever, 2; Tubercular Diseases, other than Ph. Pulminalis, 14; Cancer, 8; Bronchitis, 15; Pneumonia, 36; Alcoholism, 5; Heart Diseases, 24.

The number of deaths of children under one year was 108, giving a death-rate of 201·86 per thousand children born, compared to 184 in 1900, and 212 in 1899.

The increased death-rate and infantile mortality is largely due to the severe epidemic of ***Diarrhœa*** experienced during the summer months. From this cause alone the deaths amounted to 59, making 17·5 per cent. of the total number of deaths from all causes, and 80·2 per cent. of the deaths from Zymotic Diseases.

The disease was of exceptional severity, and affected a large number of children in all parts of the district. The outbreak commenced in July, was very severe in August, and ended at the latter end of September. The disease also affected a large number of adults, but these proved more amenable to treatment. I attribute the epidemic to the excessive heat and drought, to the unsuitable quality and quantity of food given to infants and children, especially to the too frequent feeding of infants, to the use of unclean feeding bottles and dummy teats, and to the deficient ventilation of some of the houses.

On these premises I caused to be distributed, handbills, giving advice to mothers as to the feeding of infants, laying stress on the cleanliness to be observed, and on the interval to be allowed between feeding, and also with advice as to ventilation of houses.

Scarlet Fever has been prevalent in this district during the whole year, 86 cases having been notified, of which there were four deaths.

During the first half of the year the disease occurred in single cases, but in September a number of cases arose together in Howe Bridge, amongst children attending the Howe Bridge Schools. At these Schools the drainage was undergoing alterations, owing to the extension of the School premises, and on examination of these premises, I found that children were playing in a yard over open drains. I made an examination of the scholars, of whom two were sent home as suspicious cases. One of these two developed Diphtheria. The School was fumigated and disinfected ; the part of the playground undergoing repair was shut off to the scholars, and the epidemic subsided.

The disease then assumed more serious proportions in Atherton, the largest number being notified in December, viz., 30 cases.

Five of these occurred in one house, four in another, three in a third, and so on. Most of the cases have been traced to personal contact with infected cases, and indeed all the cases seem to have occurred in this manner, no other cause having been discovered.

Thirty-two cases were removed to the Sanatorium, but so many remained at home that it makes the chance of an epidemic almost as great as if no Sanatorium existed.

The isolation of cases at home is not carried out satisfactorily. In many cases children suffering from the disease being nursed in the kitchen, the other children of the family running in and out promiscuously, and to this I largely attribute the prolongation of the epidemic.

Cases have also been discovered in accidental manner, unreported, owing to the ignorance of the parents as to the nature of the illness, and as the character of the disease has been slight, there may have been other unsuspected cases at large. On

chance of this, the various Schoolmasters and Mistresses have been requested to keep a sharp look-out, and have been given the main points for detection of such a case, and I take this opportunity of thanking them for their hearty co-operation with the health department. The Schools have been disinfected and fumigated on various occasions.

Fifty cases of ***Typhoid Fever*** have been notified during the year, and there were 8 deaths. 28 of the cases were sent to the Sanatorium. This disease seems almost endemic in the district, and becomes epidemic after each spell of dry weather.

The greatest incidence occurred in the third quarter of the year. No definite cause could be discovered—no common milk supply nor article of food, but I noticed a considerable proportion of cases amongst miners, and it would be well if more supervision could be exercised over the sanitary arrangements in the pits. Thirty-six cases, or 72 per cent of the total number, occurred in houses the inhabitants of which used the old privy-middens, whilst 14, or 28 per cent, in houses with water closets. The cause of the epidemic, in my opinion, lies in the almost impossibility of finding out the different foci of the disease which have been contaminated by many years of infection. The recrudescence of the disease from these foci, assisted by the extreme heat and drought during the summer, and the consequent inability to water the streets and flush the sewers, the imperfect ventilation of houses, and the insanitary condition of some of the property. In this connection I would mention that a scheme for converting the old privy-middens into water closets is in operation, and some 200 of the worst of the former have been reported as insanitary. The chief causes of complaint are Ashpits uncovered, deep, wet, or leaking; Ashpits in too close proximity to houses; Ashpits where contents have to be wheeled into street, &c. There is considerable hope that in subsequent years this disease will decrease, as a Destructor has been erected, and instead of

sending all the ashpit refuse to the fields, &c., some of it goes to the destructor, and I strongly recommend that in future all the refuse from every ashpit be consumed by the destructor. This, in my opinion, would go a long way towards removing the Typhoid Fever from the district.

The district has been entirely free from Small Pox. Vaccination exemptions are few, and successful Vaccinations are returned at about 95%. I would urge the advisability of re-vaccination, especially amongst the class of travelling public.

The mortality from Phthisis shows a decrease on previous years, and in regard to this disease I would point out the danger of dust arising from the streets, &c., and would advise that the sweeping of the streets be carried out immediately after the watering, and that in case of extreme drought—as for instance during last summer—when sufficient water is not available, only such sweeping be done as is absolutely necessary.

I would also advise that greater attention be paid to the ventilation of buildings, and that a ventilator to each room should be insisted upon.

I would advise the Council to adopt the Voluntary notification of Phthisis. This would enable us to teach the people the danger of the disease, the manner by which it is spread, and the means by which the chances of infection may be reduced.

Stringent rules should be adopted and enforced with regard to the spitting in tramcars when the new line is opened through the district.

I have addressed a letter to you, gentlemen, asking you to remit to the proper authorities a request that children compelled to absent themselves from school, by order of the sanitary authority, be allowed their attendances during such absence, and I am pleased to see that you have complied, as I think this will be a great help to us in the prevention of infectious diseases, especially of Measles and Scarlet Fever.

The Nuisance Inspector has reported upon 229 nuisances, mainly defective drains, waste water pipes, leaking middens, &c. 79 defective privy-middens have been repaired, and 36 waste water closets provided in place of privy-middens. One Well has been condemned as unfit for use, and town's water substituted. One underground Bakehouse has been discontinued, and one House has been condemned as unfit for human habitation and closed.

The bake-houses have been examined and found satisfactory, save one, which is underground.

Slaughter-houses are well kept and in good condition.

Two whole carcasses of tuberculous beef and part of a third have been destroyed—total weight 1,140 lbs.

The farms, dairies, and milk-shops have been examined, and are fairly satisfactory. At one or two farms the cattle are supplied with drinking water from pits, and I would advise that in these cases the town's water be substituted.

The water supply from Bolton and Manchester is abundant, and of good quality.

The Common Lodging House has been examined, and found to be kept in satisfactory condition.

Samples of milk have been taken at different times, and found satisfactory.

The Sewage is treated in connection with Leigh at the Leigh and Atherton Joint Sewage Works.

Scavenging is done by the Sanitary Authority's workmen in a satisfactory manner.

I am,

Yours obediently,

J. MARSH, M.B., C.M.,

Medical Officer of Health.